United Nations A/C.3/73/SR.15

General Assembly
Seventy-third session
Official Records

Distr.: General
29 October 2018
Original: English

Third Committee

Summary record of the 15th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 11 October 2018, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Saikal ..... (Afghanistan)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 70: Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*)

(a) Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*) (A/73/41, A/73/174 and A/73/174/Corr.1, A/73/257, A/73/265, A/73/272, A/73/276 and A/73/278)

(b) Follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children (*continued*) (A/73/223)

1. **Mr. Shingiro** (Burundi) said that, as a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, two of its Optional Protocols and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, Burundi had made efforts at all levels to protect and promote the rights of children. In addition to the legal framework, the Government had established national committees to coordinate child protection and eliminate the worst forms of child labour, as well as a national children's forum. Policies and programmes had been adopted to improve the well-being of vulnerable children, including orphans, children in institutions and street children. The Government had developed a sectoral policy to reform the criminal justice system for minors.

2. Child protection was hindered by the number of vulnerable children, poor households, epidemics and insufficient resources. The country programme for Burundi adopted by the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), which aligned perfectly with the priorities of the development plan of Burundi for the period 2018–2027, was a good starting point for overcoming those challenges. Reaffirming its commitment to implement international and regional instruments, Burundi called upon some of its traditional partners to lift the unilateral and immoral economic sanctions imposed on the State, which had a negative impact on vulnerable groups in general and children in particular.

3. **Ms. Rasheed** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that, although the State of Palestine had acceded to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict, the rights of Palestinian children continued to be violated as a result of the occupation by Israel. The constant rejection by Israel of the applicability of its human rights obligations in Occupied Palestine and the perpetual inaction by the international community continued to rob Palestinian children of safety, security and, in too many cases, life.

4. In the besieged Gaza Strip, where children made up nearly half the population, hundreds of children had died as a result of Israeli military assaults, violence and explosive remnants of war, and Israeli policies had left children without adequate food, safe drinking water, health care, education or safe spaces. In the past six months, Palestinian children had been killed and injured by Israeli forces while exercising their right to peacefully protest against the occupation. Many human rights organizations, including Human Rights Watch, had stated that such use of lethal force by Israel might constitute war crimes. It was high time for the international community to hold the occupying Power accountable and bring an end to its culture of impunity.

5. In the Occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, the Israeli occupying forces continued to render Palestinian children homeless through home demolitions and evictions and to arbitrarily detain and imprison hundreds of Palestinian children, in contravention of international legal standards. The United Nations and human rights organizations had documented hundreds of cases of Palestinian children being subjected to ill treatment, including torture, while in Israeli custody. The State of Palestine called upon the occupying Power to release all Palestinian children in its prisons and detention centres and to put an immediate end to that cruel and illegal practice.

6. The international community must exhibit the moral and political courage necessary to take action to put an end to the illegal occupation by Israel of Palestinian land. That was the only way to enable Palestinian children to live in peace and freedom in their own independent State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

7. **Mr. Espiritu** (Observer for the Sovereign Order of Malta) said that the Order had a particular concern for displaced children. In June 2018, its medical team aboard an Italian coastguard vessel had provided medical attention to migrants, including unaccompanied minors, rescued off the Libyan coastline. The Order had cared for more than 55,000 migrants in collaboration with the Italian navy and coastguard since 2008. It maintained facilities for refugees in Germany and provided language courses to children in France. The Order continued to support medical facilities serving refugee children in Iraq, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic and Turkey. It provided food aid for displaced and malnourished children in Bangladesh, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Namibia and South Sudan. Child malnutrition units had been established in many of its hospitals, while nurses travelled to remote areas without hospitals to treat undernourished children.

8. In accordance with the Order's 900-year-old mission of caring for the sick and vulnerable, its Bethlehem hospital delivered 70 per cent of all babies in the district, and it provided maternity and paediatric services in Chad and Madagascar. The Order would soon open a unit in the United Republic of Tanzania for Burundian refugee mothers. Honouring its commitment to children with disabilities, the Order had opened a centre for Roma children with developmental disabilities in Albania and was working to ensure the right to education of children with severe mental disabilities in Lebanon.

9. **Ms. Achurch** (Observer for the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)) said that, according to United Nations data, 263 million children, adolescents and young adults were currently out of school, and about 75 million of them lacked access to adequate education owing to armed conflict, disasters and other emergencies. Lack of access to, or the systematic disruption of, education could have dramatic repercussions on the prospects of entire generations. The enhanced awareness of the importance of considering education to be a humanitarian need and the increasing development and use of information and communications technology in the service of education were promising developments. Nevertheless, education remained the most poorly supported public service in humanitarian contexts. More needed to be done for those living outside camps or relatively safe zones, and more attention needed to be focused on pre-primary, secondary and tertiary education, considering that the largest group of children out of school were between the ages of 15 and 17.

10. Nearly one third of the national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies had programmes related to education and schools. The Colombian Red Cross provided training for medical students who had been forced to interrupt their studies, and the Red Crescent Society in Yemen ran safe spaces where education, health and psychosocial support could be delivered. In its resolution entitled "Education: related humanitarian needs", adopted in in November 2017, the Council of Delegates of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement had made a commitment to increase efforts in that area, especially in situations of armed conflict, disasters and other emergencies.

11. **Ms. Barth** (International Labour Organization) said that, although child labour had declined dramatically since 2000, the pace of decline had slowed considerably in the past few years, at a time when substantial acceleration was needed to reach the ambitious target date of 2025 for ending child labour, as set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The declaration adopted at the fourth Global Conference on the Sustained Eradication of Child Labour outlined the action to be taken by the international community to redouble efforts to combat child labour and forced labour. Policy responses must be integrated into broader national development efforts and adapted to local circumstances. Inclusive development policies needed to integrate the application of international labour standards related to child labour, including by turning standards into national laws, promoting labour market policies in areas with the highest levels of child labour, expanding social protection floors and achieving high-quality universal education. To support Governments in their efforts to end child labour by 2025, ILO had launched Alliance 8.7, focused on accelerating action, conducting research and leveraging resources.

12. **Mr. Lee Wee Tiong** (Singapore) said that, as a small city State with no natural resources except for its people, Singapore had always prioritized the education and nurturing of its children. It had been ranked as having one of the lowest child mortality rates by UNICEF and had tied as the best country for children to grow up in according to the End of Childhood Index, compiled by Save the Children.

13. As part of its continuous efforts to improve its policies for children, Singapore had amended the Children and Young Persons Act to enhance the welfare and care of children, the Women's Charter and the Administration of Muslim Law Act to improve support for children from divorced families. Recognizing the importance of early childhood development, Singapore had established an agency to oversee key aspects of the development of children below the age of 7 and put in place measures to ensure that childcare and preschool services remained affordable and accessible for all. In 2018, it had launched a transformation map for the early childhood industry with the aims of introducing innovative services to meet the needs of parents and children, streamlining processes to help preschool operators to manage costs and to allow educators to devote more time to teaching, and expanding opportunities for passionate and able individuals to join the growing early childhood profession. As a result, a record number of children were attending preschool and more children were enrolled at a younger age.

14. **Ms. Vadhanaphong** (Thailand) said that, as validated by the World Health Organization, Thailand had become the first country in the Asia and Pacific region to eliminate mother-to-child transmission of HIV and syphilis. Its child support grant scheme, introduced in 2015, had led to an improvement in the nutrition provided to children and to increased access to basic

services, such as postnatal care. Its efforts to provide access to compulsory education had been extended to include children with status problems and undocumented migrant children. In line with its Constitution, Thailand implemented gender responsive budgeting in education and strove to promote gender sensitive education in all schools.

15. Thailand welcomed the various initiatives of the Secretary-General and the United Nations to empower children, such as the U-Report platform of UNICEF and the recently launched United Nations Youth Strategy 2030. Thailand had been promoting science, technology, engineering and maths education to empower young people to meet the demands of the technology-driven economy. It had adopted a national strategy to protect children and young people in the use of online media with a view to preventing online abuse and violence against children, including cyberbullying.

16. All children in Thailand, including the children of migrants, were protected by the Child Protection Act of 2003. The national policy framework provided undocumented migrant children with access to birth registration, free public compulsory education and basic health care, and the migrant health insurance scheme provided a range of maternal and child health services. In fulfilling the pledge made at the high-level plenary meeting on addressing large movements of refugees and migrants, Thai agencies were working to finalize the memorandum of understanding on cooperation in order to create an alternative to detention for migrant children in immigration detention centres. Thailand was ready to strengthen its collaboration with countries of origin, transit and destination and relevant stakeholders to protect the rights of all children on the move.

17. **Ms. Alzouman** (Kuwait) said that more States had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child than any other international human rights instrument. Noting that 2019 would mark the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention, Kuwait strongly encouraged those States that had not yet signed the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography to do so at the earliest opportunity. Kuwait was deeply concerned about the increasing incidence of human rights abuses against children. Putting an end to those grave offences was not only a legal and moral duty, but could also promote peace and social cohesion.

18. In 2017, her country had held the first regional conference on the protection of children and young people from the risks of social media, which had addressed a number of Internet-related dangers faced by children, including data theft, blackmail and sexual harassment. Kuwait welcomed progress made by Member States towards the formulation and implementation of comprehensive national plans and policies to protect children from violence, including bullying, and the support of relevant United Nations agencies in that regard. Kuwait called for concerted international action and the sharing of best practices in order to strengthen countries' child protection mechanisms.

19. Under the Constitution of Kuwait, the family was the basis of society and was founded on religion, morality and patriotism. Kuwait had enacted national legislation concerning the family and children and, in 2015, had enacted a law establishing a family court, which addressed cases of domestic violence. Furthermore, the law on the rights of the child stipulated that children had the right to a cohesive family environment, as well as to education, health and protection from all forms of violence, harm or physical abuse.

20. **Ms. El Kbiri** (Morocco) said that her country had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols, including the Optional Protocol on a communications procedure, reflecting its continuing commitment to combat all forms of neglect, violence and exploitation of children and to strengthen related systems. In article 34 of the new Constitution, the rights of children were enshrined, and precedence was given to international conventions over national law. As a result, a number of projects and initiatives had been launched to adapt legal instruments.

21. The Ministry of Solidarity, Women, Family and Social Development and the ministerial commission on children had adopted policies for the promotion of the rights of children, including the protection of children from all forms of violence, abuse, exploitation, neglect and trafficking. Morocco had launched an integrated public policy for the protection of children for the decade 2015–2025, the aims of which included strengthening the legal framework and implementing regional initiatives for the protection of children, standardizing frameworks and good practices, and developing information, monitoring and assessment systems. The firm commitment of Morocco to protect children had been demonstrated at the highest level with the Mohammed V Foundation for Solidarity and the National Observatory for Children's Rights.

22. **Ms. Cedeño Rengifo** (Panama) said that her delegation had noted with concern the comments of the

Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children related to bullying in schools. Children were increasingly victims of bullying on social media sites. Given their long-lasting and dangerous effects, bullying and cyberbullying should be addressed comprehensively and effectively.

23. Through the National Secretariat for Children, Adolescents and Family, Panama promoted measures to ensure respect for the rights of children, including training workshops in border areas on assisting migrant and particularly vulnerable children and adolescents. The State's investment in social development using the Multidimensional Poverty Index was key to reducing poverty and its consequences in relation to child labour. The Government had focused its efforts on dramatically reducing child labour through preventive and awareness-raising measures, in collaboration with the private sector. Panama reiterated its unwavering commitment to global efforts to guarantee the full protection of children's rights and condemned all forms of violence and bullying against children.

24. **Mr. Panayotov** (Bulgaria) said that the commitment of his country to protect and guarantee the fundamental rights of the child was enshrined in law. Child rights were at the top of the agenda for the candidature of Bulgaria for the Human Rights Council. Bulgaria had established itself as an active defender of the rights of the child globally, both as co-founder and co-chair of the Group of Friends for Children and Sustainable Development Goals and through its contributions to various intergovernmental agreements, including the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants.

25. The Government was working hard to guarantee and protect the rights of the most vulnerable groups of children, such as migrant children, children with disabilities and children from ethnic minorities. A new strategy for the protection of all children, with a focus on early childhood development, was being developed in collaboration with institutions, non-governmental organizations and children themselves. Bulgaria was actively involved in the initiative of UNICEF, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and non-governmental organizations to hold, during the fortieth session of the Human Rights Council, a meeting on the theme "Empowering children with disabilities for the enjoyment of their human rights, including through inclusive education".

26. In the light of its firm conviction that children should be direct participants in political processes and decision-making, the Government had launched, in 2006, a programme for Bulgarian youth delegates to the United Nations. Participants in the programme were currently in New York working on the priorities of education and decent work, which had been identified through a survey of more than 700 young Bulgarians.

27. **Ms. Mōnōko** (Lesotho) said that, despite numerous laws purporting to protect children, many children were still subjected to early and forced marriages, including marriages by abduction. In Lesotho, about 1 in 5 girls were married before their eighteenth birthday. A recent assessment conducted by the Ministry of Health had revealed that more than 13,000 girls between the ages of 14 and 17 were not enrolled in school and more than 1,700 of those girls were married. In a bid to address that issue, the Government had adopted laws making it compulsory for every child to attend school, establishing the legal age of marriage at 21 for both men and women and requiring the written consent of legal guardians to allow marriage at the age of 18 for both boys and girls. The Government had also adopted policies to ensure social protection for all children and full care and support for orphaned and vulnerable children. It had recently launched a campaign to end child marriage and was committed to the attainment of target 5.3 of the Sustainable Development Goals, to end child marriage by 2030.

28. **Ms. Prizreni** (Albania) said that, in 2017, the Government had adopted a law on the rights and protection of children, in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the national action plan for children for the period 2016–2020. The law provided for the establishment of a State agency and a national council for the rights and protection of children and contained clear definitions of sensitive terms such as "violence against children", "unaccompanied children", "harmful content for children", "child representation" and "school psychosocial services". The law was applicable to all children in Albania, regardless of their nationality or status, and to Albanian children abroad.

29. A priority of the Government was to strengthen governance for equity and social inclusion and access to justice for children, with the aim of laying the foundation for a stronger institutional system. To achieve the goal of no detention for children and juveniles, the Government was implementing a system of child protection workers. Civil society in Albania worked to strengthen child protection systems and maternal and child health services and to tackle issues such as poverty eradication, climate change and gender equality. Albania had engaged in partnerships with UNICEF and private media companies to raise public awareness of the rights of children, including by

broadcasting UNICEF video features on child rights and public service announcements condemning violence against children.

Agenda item 29: Advancement of women (*continued*) (A/73/38, A/73/263, A/73/266, A/73/285, A/73/294, A/73/301)

30. **Ms. Sentissi** (Morocco) said that the achievement of political, social and economic equality, with women as full partners in all aspects of development, was essential for supporting both democracy and sustainable human development. While joint efforts and strengthened will had led to progress in solving some of the problems facing women and in empowering them to prove their capacity to participate in national development and prosperity, much remained to be done.

31. The particular priority given to women's issues, placing them at the heart of modernization efforts, had led to considerable progress benefiting women from all regions and social strata across Morocco. The Mohammed V Foundation for Solidarity, created to improve the situation of women and school-aged girls, in particular in rural areas, granted microcredit to unemployed women. Steps towards further progress included the 2004 reform of the Family Code; the rise of many women to important positions in politics and public affairs; the application of the principle of equality as outlined in the 2011 Constitution; and the law adopted in September 2018, addressing violence against women and imposing strict penalties for sexual abuse and harassment.

32. In recent years, non-governmental organizations and civil society stakeholders had also played an active role in front-line efforts to promote the rights of women and girls in the legislative, cultural, social and economic spheres, through networks involved in local development, literacy and support for disadvantaged women.

33. **Ms. Mehdiyeva** (Azerbaijan), welcoming recent institutional changes at the United Nations, including the Secretary-General's system-wide strategy on gender parity, said that, while the adoption of international instruments and mechanisms had stimulated significant progress towards gender parity and improved the situation of many women, the majority continued to face a wide variety of challenges.

34. Recent gender-responsive activities in Azerbaijan had included the preparation of a draft law on amending legislation on gender equality; the development of a draft national action plan on women and peace and security , with support from the United Nations Population Fund and other partners; and an online database and a hotline operated by counsellors trained to provide assistance and information to victims and survivors of domestic violence. The fifth Women's Forum, held in May 2018, had been dedicated to the 100th anniversary of women's suffrage in Azerbaijan, the first Muslim country to grant women the right to vote.

35. The State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs had implemented a project, jointly with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), to promote rural women's participation in economic and social life — a key priority area for the Government — by helping women with disabilities to develop business skills, holding gender equality training sessions and improving access to clean water and sanitation facilities for schoolgirls. UNDP had also helped to organize the country's first-ever Women's Regional Conference, in July 2018, to enable rural women's concerns to be voiced and their priorities mainstreamed into national policymaking. The Government had created a special public entity to support rural populations in establishing small, medium-sized and family-run businesses.

36. Government institutions had also made strides towards gender parity, with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs having achieved that goal already. Azerbaijan stood ready to work with the international community on advancing the rights of women, in line with its international commitments and obligations.

37. **Mr. Cooreman** (Belgium) said that, nearly 40 years after the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and nearly 20 years since the adoption of its Optional Protocol, the full realization of women's human rights was still far from the reality, including in his own country. Although 189 States had ratified the Convention to date, many States parties had made substantive reservations, including to the crucial article 2, which could significantly limit the obligations undertaken by those States, thereby undermining the object and purpose of the Convention. Belgium therefore encouraged the States parties concerned to review and withdraw their reservations. Belgium also called upon all States parties that had not submitted their periodic reports to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women to do so as soon as possible, and States that had not yet ratified the Optional Protocol to seize the occasion of its twentieth anniversary to consider ratifying it.

38. **Ms. Alfuhaid** (Kuwait) said that recent campaigns led by women in many States had raised awareness of the many challenges faced by women worldwide,

including sexual harassment and gender-based violence, and had underscored the urgent need for concerted action by all relevant stakeholders to address those challenges. Kuwait welcomed the progress that had been made towards the achievement of gender parity among United Nations staff, and commended the steps taken by the Secretary General to combat sexual harassment and the mistreatment of women within the Organization.

39. Every woman and every girl was entitled to live without fear of persecution or violence. Not only was violence against women and girls a grave violation of their human rights, it also impeded sustainable development. Kuwait was therefore taking all possible steps to combat it; it provided medical treatment and psychological care to victims of violence and abuse at healthcare centres throughout the country and had established safe houses for domestic violence victims. A 24-hour telephone helpline was also being established to provide victims with legal, social and psychological counselling.

40. In closing, she called on Member States to bolster their political will and work together to develop innovative approaches to bring to an end all forms of violence and discrimination against women and girls and ensure that their human rights were fully respected.

41. **Ms. Al-Mawlawi** (Qatar) said that empowering women had long been a priority for her country; women's empowerment and equality were addressed in all national plans and strategies, including the Qatar National Vision 2030. Qatar was, moreover, making every effort to uphold its commitments pursuant to regional and international instruments addressing the human rights of women, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Qatar had been one of the first countries in the Arabian Gulf region to offer free education to girls and, as part of its efforts to facilitate the achievement of the goals set forth in the Charlevoix Declaration on Quality Education for Girls, Adolescent Girls and Women in Developing Countries, was supporting projects that aimed to provide free education to at least one million girls by 2021.

42. Women had been appointed to senior positions in Government, the judiciary, the diplomatic corps and academia, and frequently represented their country in international forums. Qatar had recently amended its legislation on migrant workers to revoke the requirement that most workers obtain exit visas in order to leave the country. That legislative step, which had been warmly welcomed by the International Labour Organization, would facilitate efforts to combat trafficking in persons, and particularly trafficking in women and girls. Qatar had adopted legislation to support families by promoting an appropriate balance between work and family obligations. It had also adopted legislation criminalizing domestic violence and had established a number of mechanisms that sought to combat such violence, offer protection to its victims and facilitate their reintegration into society.

43. In 2016, the Permanent Mission of Qatar to the United Nations had co-hosted an exhibition and published a booklet entitled "Her Story: A Celebration of Leading Women in the United Nations", which had highlighted the key role played by women leaders at the Organization over the years.

44. **Ms. Karunanayake** (Sri Lanka), speaking as a youth delegate, said that, despite recent women-centric movements, such as "#MeToo" and the "HeForShe" campaign, patriarchy remained widely prevalent and fair treatment for women from all society stakeholders worldwide remained questionable.

45. Although Sri Lankan women across all sectors had found success — the world's first woman Prime Minister, elected in 1960, the current Envoy of the Secretary-General on Youth and the first Sri Lankan to summit Mount Everest, the country still faced challenges with regard to discrimination and violence against women. The nearly 30-year war had left numerous widows and orphans and many households headed by women, who continued, years later, to face economic, physical and psychological hardships, balancing household duties and childcare with their roles as sole breadwinner while battling social stigma. Working closely with grassroots civil society groups, the Government had implemented psychosocial well-being programmes in areas where the conflict had been most prevalent and had assigned a counsellor and a women's development officer to every divisional secretariat to work more closely on day-to-day issues faced by women.

46. The Women's Bureau and the National Committee on Women, both under the Ministry of Women and Child Affairs, were working to create a gender-sensitized society, through the implementation of Government commitments on gender equality overseen by civil society organizations. A national framework for women-headed households in post-conflict Sri Lanka had been developed to address socioeconomic insecurities faced by women. Since its ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, Sri Lanka had been mainstreaming gender priorities and strategies. In 2017, the Government introduced legislation to guarantee a minimum of 25 per cent local representation, in an effort to give women a

voice in governance. Nevertheless, it was everyone's responsibility, not that of Government alone, to put an end to the stereotyping of women and to ensure respect for and the empowerment of women.

47. **Ms. Mucavi** (Director, Food and Agriculture Organization Liaison Office in New York) said that rural women were critical agents of the transformational change needed to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda and leave no one behind. Because women often faced greater constraints than men with regard to access to resources, services and opportunities, it was urgent to lift rural women and girls out of poverty and ensure their rights and well-being.

48. Numerous means for closing the gender gap had been outlined in the dedicated targets of the 2030 Agenda and in recommendations presented at the recent General Assembly side event on rural women co-organized by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the African Union Commission. Through the Joint Programme on Accelerating Progress towards the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women, FAO, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, WFP and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) were contributing to wide-ranging improvements in the living conditions, productivity and rights of rural women.

49. With nearly half of all FAO international posts currently held by women, the agency took gender parity and equality very seriously and had been recently commended by UN-Women for achieving or exceeding almost all performance indicators of the System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. The Director General had also endorsed the collective statement of the members of the Secretary-General's circle of leadership on the prevention of and response to sexual exploitation and abuse in United Nations operations.

50. **Mr. Carvalho Pinheiro** (Special Representative to the United Nations and Director of the International Labour Organization Office in New York) said that despite significant progress over the past century, gender equality in the labour market was far from being achieved. In many parts of the world, women were largely excluded from the labour force. Overall, women were overrepresented in low-paying, informal and non-standard forms of employment and underrepresented in senior management positions in the corporate world. Stepped-up policy efforts were needed to redress those challenges, in particular in three key policy areas: equal pay for work of equal value; decent work in the care economy; and violence and harassment in the workplace.

51. In order to speed up the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal target 8.5, ILO, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and UN-Women created the Equal Pay International Coalition, a multi-stakeholder partnership aimed at encouraging universal ratification of the ILO Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100) by 2030 and ensuring visible efforts and results by Governments and the private sector to implement equal pay initiatives. All Committee members were encouraged to visit the website and join the Coalition.

52. The disproportionate responsibility for unpaid care work and the absence of accessible, quality and affordable care posed a crucial obstacle to the advancement of women. Adequate investment in the care economy would generate millions of additional jobs and contribute to the achievement of Goal 8. In addition, a new international standard currently being prepared by ILO aimed at eradicating unfair and abusive treatment at work, which affected all industries worldwide, but primarily targeted women, would add force to the push for equality.

53. **Ms. Banaken Elel** (Cameroon) said that, although practiced by only a small minority in Cameroon, female genital mutilation remained a concern for her Government. Measures included the 2016 revision of the Penal Code, which now contained an express prohibition of the practice and imposed strict penalties on practitioners. In addition, localized awareness strategies had been implemented across the country since 2014, accompanied by programmes to provide support for victims and retraining for former practitioners.

54. Further awareness-raising activities specifically targeting women and community leaders, including political, traditional and religious authorities, were regularly held on days established to honour women and families and advocate against violence against women, in particular the International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation, with a view to breaking the silence surrounding harmful sociocultural practices and fostering the social empowerment of women.

55. Among efforts to ensure equality in the political sphere, the Electoral Code of 2012 had been designed to take gender into account in the composition of electoral lists, and a subsequent strategic plan imposed minimum quotas for women candidates. The proportion of women elected had more than doubled as a result. The Government had also established a

minimum quota for women in public decision-making positions under its strategy for growth and employment. Cameroon reiterated its commitment to intensifying its actions to better protect women from attacks against their rights, including all forms of violence.

The meeting rose at 11.40 a.m.